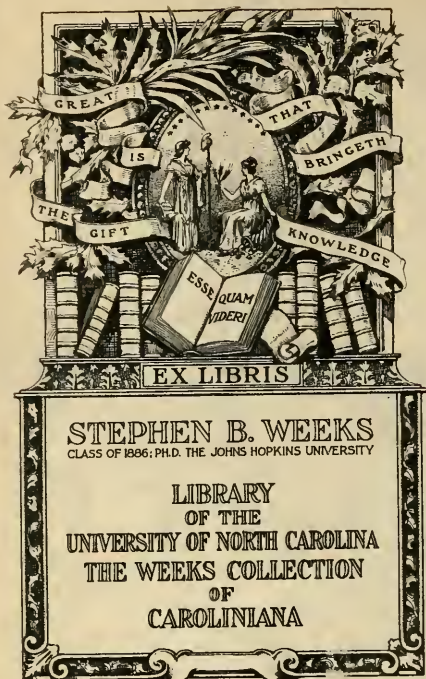


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ADDRESS
OF
CAPTAIN C. B. DENSON,

UPON THE INVITATION OF
THE DAUGHTERS OF THE CONFEDERACY
OF NORTH CAROLINA,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE STATE CHAPTER, U. D. C.,
IN RALEIGH,

OCTOBER 10, 1900.

ADDRESS OF CAPT. C. B. DENSON, UPON THE
INVITATION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF THE
CONFEDERACY OF NORTH CAROLINA, DELIV-
ERED BEFORE THE STATE CHAPTER, U. D. C.,
IN RALEIGH, N. C., OCTOBER 10, 1900.

To be commissioned to utter the sentiments of this, the greatest representative body of the women of North Carolina which has ever assembled, touching the sacred mission you hold, together with your sisters of the South, for the erection of the memorial pile to the first and last President of the Confederate States, is a privilege so great, an honor so profound, that it should be undertaken in the humblest spirit by any spokesman of his comrades of the gray.

Forty thousand who lie in their last blankets among the clods of the valley, could they lift their mangled forms to stand in this presence, and thousands more who have followed them to dreamless rest, and yet other thousands upon whom the snows of time have fallen, and whose feet are swiftly traveling to the sunset—all these, dear countrywomen, speak by this voice in reverent gratitude to you and of your work, and they say, "Thank God for the Daughters of the Confederacy."

Daughters of the Confederacy! The very name is a benison upon the past; it is a tribute of laurel upon each grass-grown grave. Daughters of the Confederacy! It rings in our ears as if sweet bells pealed their chimes through the storm and sunshine of forty years, and we seem to hear their echoes going on to the ages yet to come.

Jefferson Davis stands alone, in a niche of his own, in human history. His life is without a parallel. In genius, in attainments, in character, he was almost illimitable.

As the Spaniard stood upon his "peak, in Darien," and

gazed upon the boundless Pacific, spreading into unknown horizon, filled the while with astonishment and awe, so feels the student of human character as he dwells upon this majestic figure in American annals.

JEFFERSON DAVIS WAS A SOLDIER.

The youngest son of ten children of a Revolutionary soldier of Georgia, he was born in Christian county, Kentucky, June 3, 1808, but moved to Mississippi in infancy. When in the senior class at Transylvania University, at sixteen, he was appointed cadet at West Point, and graduated in 1828.

Then came frontier life for the protection of the West, and he bore himself with such gallantry in the Black Hawk war that, when the struggle with the Indian warriors was at last successful, the renowned chief was sent to St. Louis under the special charge of the young lieutenant.

He won the love of the fair daughter of Zachary Taylor, afterwards General and President, who was opposed to a union that involved the hardships of a soldier's for his beloved child.

Peace came, Lieut. Davis laid down his commission, and with his hard-won bride, plunged into the swamps of the Mississippi for the cotton-planter's life.

Success followed, but the cup was dashed from his lips by the loss of his lovely bride. Many years passed before he emerged from the seclusion of his sorrow—years of such study and contemplation in his withdrawal from the world as made him master of science and philosophy.

War clouds rolled up again, and the United States was involved in a contest with Mexico, over Texas. Mississippi organized a regiment of volunteers, and called him to command as Colonel. This expression of confidence from the brave young patriots who won such distinction in the field of arms, came to him as a surprise, while in Washington, serving as representative for the State at large in Congress. To accept was to leave the field of ambition, where

leadership was rapidly coming, and it was to leave the sweet ties of home, for in the previous year the devoted partner of his life, Varina Howell, had become his wife, and this gracious lady, so long his helpmeet through numberless trials and sorrows, yet survives as his widow, encircled by the affection of millions.

But ambition was denied, even love regretfully surrendered when the voice of duty called. He could not forget that a soldier's son, he was bred a soldier. He sprang to the field; at his urgent request, almost demand, he obtained a new weapon—the percussion rifle—for the flint-lock musket Gen. Scott was wedded to. He drilled his officers and men with a manual devised by himself for the rifle, and soon the day of battle came.

At Monterey his troops carried the redoubt La Tanavaria, from which others had recoiled. He entered the city with the retreating Mexicans, and fought his way through the blasted walls of the houses where the streets were untenable on account of the fire of the Mexican artillery.

Victory over, the city won, there came the dash of sixty miles through a desert and the battle of Buena Vista. It was a desperate undertaking by Taylor's army, against three times their number in strong position.

When other troops of Taylor's army had been driven back by superior force, and their broken ranks were streaming to the rear, his stern command rang out, "Steady, Mississippians; close up! forward!" Quick, by seizing two ridges at an obtuse angle, that commanded a ravine up which the enemy must approach, the deadly fire which destroyed the advancing columns forever gave a name in history to "the Mississippi rifle."

This was the origin of what has been said of the marvelous V formation, which every military man knows, upon an ordinary plain, would invite defeat by flank attack from the enemy.

The dangers of the day to the Americans were many, and when the threatened capture of Bragg's battery would have completed its ruin, Col. Davis rushed his regiment for a mile at the double quick, and drove back with fearful slaughter three successive attacks by the infantry, the dragoons, and the lancers, and the long and hard-fought day was won.

Well might the grizzled old General declare, "Napoleon never had a marshal who behaved more superbly than Col. Davis did to-day!"

And all this while enduring agony. Early in the morning a Mexican bullet had shattered his foot. Unheeding pain and exhaustion of blood, or the entreaties of others, he kept the saddle the livelong day, until victory was won.

The ministrations of a faithful brother officer through the night probably saved foot and life, but the broken bones could not then be removed at once, and he was condemned to return on crutches to his home.

When, fifteen years later, his State called together her troops for the war for Southern independence, he became Major-General commanding, and was with difficulty induced to give up the tented field to accept the crushing responsibilities of the great part which he neither sought nor desired, the Presidency of the Confederate States.

Even then he was kept from the perils of the lines only by the magnitude of the task which no other hand could perform. It was once the duty of A. P. Hill to beseech, nay, to order him from the line of battle, in front of Richmond, where death was falling thick and fast. Was he not a soldier?

JEFFERSON DAVIS WAS A STATESMAN.

Entering politics after a seclusion of eight years, he boldly met the famous Sargent Prentiss in debate, then the most renowned orator of the Southwest. As soon as he was able for service after the Mexican struggle he was sent to the Senate of the United States, and from the beginning

was a conspicuous figure. And this was an era of giants in that body, never equalled before or since. Clay, Webster, Calhoun and their compeers yet survived, while younger men were there, destined to play great parts in the widening future.

His leadership came from his inflexible will and unswerving adherence to principle; to this he added perfect mastery of the facts in the complicated questions of debate, a minute acquaintance with the history and philosophy of the Constitution and of the whole political life of the States constituting the federation: The crowning grace was utter forgetfulness of self, and courtesy to the bitterest opponent of his measures.

President Pierce wished him to become Secretary of War, and here the administrative side of statesmanship was exhibited as never before in that chair.

He reformed the office routine, appointing officials purely for competency and experience; changed the system of tactics to adapt it to modern warfare, introduced improved weapons and projectiles, especially the minnie rifle; substituted iron carriages for artillery, instead of wood; largely extended the system of arsenals and fortifications; established a chain of permanent garrisoned forts to protect settlers in the West; sent accomplished officers, like McClellan and others, to Europe to study warfare, and set on foot the preparatory surveys for a railroad to the Pacific as a measure of defensive importance to the country. Every detail, however minute, had his watchful eye.

It is not too much to say that he vivified the department and made it a great arm of the government. Yet the day came when from its portals issued the orders to cast ignominy upon him, which the judgment of mankind has flung back upon the master whose malice conceived and the slave who abjectly obeyed such orders.

Returning to the Senate, he was the leader and defender of the party that championed the rights of the States, and

one of the committee of thirteen to devise measures of conciliation of the respective sections upon the eve of the war.

Convinced, as he has irrefutably proven, of the right of the state to withdraw from a compact broken by the once sister States, he was never an advocate of the policy of withdrawal, except when no other course was left to a self-respecting people. If any desired secession as a good in itself, he was not invited to their councils.

But when all efforts for peace with justice and honor were in vain, and Mississippi notified him of her withdrawal from the Union, he took leave of the Senate, and, upon his election, assumed the reins of the Confederate government, at Montgomery, Ala., February 18, 1861, and transferred the same afterward to Richmond, upon the secession of Virginia.

Here was the supreme test of the statesman. To organize an army thirty times as large as Washington ever commanded, although it was destined to be opposed by nearly three millions of troops. For a country almost purely agricultural, and which was wholly without military manufactures of any character, from a gun cap or a grain of powder to a siege train, to equip and furnish with arms, artillery and munitions a force which was to contend for five years in the greatest battles of modern times and to meet in two thousand two hundred combats, great and small, an army formed from unlimited men and with the wealth of the world at command.

To gather a navy from the wrecks in Southern navy yards, or picked up obscurely on foreign shores, and with such means to drive northern commerce from the seas; to revolutionize naval warfare among the nations of the earth by the iron-clad and the torpedo, and carry the battle-cross flag around the world in triumph!

To maintain the rights of the judiciary, and to preserve the sacred writ of habeas corpus and the orderly conduct of civil government; and that in the face of its daily violation

across the Potomac, in outrage of the very Constitution which they claimed they were warring upon others to obey!

What statesman of all the world ever accomplished such tasks?

If his power of administration be judged by his choice of men for service, behold the Cabinet filled by Toombs, Benjamin, Hunter, George Davis, Randolph, Trenholm, Seddon, Breckinridge, Watts, Reagan, and like giants of those days.

And who received his commission at the head of the Confederate armies? Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Albert Sidney Johnston, Joseph E. Johnston, and their great lieutenants, Stuart, Beauregard, A. P. Hill, D. H. Hill, Forrest, Whiting, Polk, Pender, Longstreet, Hardee, Hampton, Hoke, Ewell, Kirby Smith, Stephen D. Lee, Hood, Branch, Pettigrew, Grimes, Anderson, Early, Cleburne, Gordon, Ashby, Ransom, Pickett, Lane—where shall we pause in the roll of the immortals?

It has been well said, "Men judge Napoleon by his marshals." Judge Jefferson Davis and his cause by his chosen chieftains.

JEFFERSON DAVIS WAS AN ORATOR.

To him came the supreme gift of oratory—that speech hot from the heart and winged with uplifting power, which bears listener with speaker into a sphere of its own, beyond the common and sordid things of earth.

He had no tricks of tongue. He was simple in words, but pitiless in logic; abounding in illustration, clear, pungent, overpowering in conclusion.

A writer has pictured his appearance in the Senate thus: "Of the Norman type, tall, sinewy, with fair hair, gray eyes, high forehead, straight nose, thin compressed lips, pointed chin, with cheeks hollow, and many intersecting furrows about the mouth." The distinctive type was that of "sharpness of feature and intensity of expression," giv-

ing force to the penetrating thought which reached the depths of every heart.

Among his compeers in the Senate were Thos. H. Benton of Missouri, Mangum of North Carolina, who had been its presiding officer; Chase of Ohio, Berrien of Georgia, Bell of Tennessee, and towering in their midst, the three great leaders of the entire country in their respective policies, Clay, Webster and Calhoun.

Yet, when Jefferson Davis spoke, men listened as if in a trance, and his dominant spirit was at home, "Listening senates to command."

Prescott, the historian, who was familiar with the greatest parliamentarians and the most powerful orators of Europe, declared, as he beheld him, "Mr. Davis is the most accomplished man in the Senate." And when asked if he had given that judgment, replied, "Yes, he has strength, animation, energy, classical elegance and luminous simplicity. He is finished, logical and effective; in manner and argument nearer the perfect model of a Senator than any other member of the body.

Read his speeches to-day;—of all the riches of our mother tongue, as compared with his farewell defence of the South in leaving the Senate forever, where is there a more "entire and perfect chrysolite?"

I despair of conveying the touch of the burning eloquence that burst from his inspired frame, when in the darkest grimmest hour of all, he invoked every true soldier to stand at his post, and live or die, survive or perish, with his country's liberties.

Never will I forget the scene before us, as the troops visibly rose and fell in response to sentences from the heart of a patriot, with the majesty of a prophet.

Oh, well says the ancient adage, the orator is not made—he is born, God's gift. The stream of his genius bursts from the rock of circumstance in as many forms perhaps as the ~~speaking~~ cascades of many regions; but as there is

sparkling

swelled the chorus of the timid and the time-serving. That to me would be treason. Treason to truth and right, to honor and duty. A crime which through that war and after could not be laid at our door."

A lover of the welfare of the whole country, the deepest wrench to the feelings of the patriot came with the striking down of the Confederacy with the world power allied against her. What a picture was the closing drama of the war! Disaster after disaster wrung the hearts, but could not terrify the souls, of the few, against a myriad of foes. A great man has nobly said: "Vicksburg falls—Gettysburg is lost; armies wither. Generals die in the thick of the fight; a private soldier is all of a company. Fields devastated, crops burned, flocks and herds consumed, naught is left but man and steel—the soldier and his sword. Atlanta, Mobile, Charleston go—the Confederacy is cut to pieces. The last port is sealed at Wilmington—the world and the South are parted.

"Everything fails but manhood—and womanhood, thank God! The woman cooks, and weaves and works; nurses the stricken, buries her dead and cheers the living. The man stands to his gun, behind Johnston, behind Lee. Petersburg and Richmond starve and bleed, yet remain dauntless. And while the thunders shake the Capitol, and the earth trembles, there stands Jefferson Davis, unshaken, untrembling, toiling to give bread to his armies and their kindred; toiling to hold up the fainting arms of his veterans.

"At last the very fountains of nature fail. The exhausted South falls prone upon its shield. Hope, the battle-cross flag; gone—forever gone."

JEFFERSON DAVIS WAS A CHRISTIAN.

When the mortal blow was struck, the President was at the worship of God, in His sanctuary. He was a faithful communicant of the church of Washington, and of Lee. He loved to recall how Washington had built a log chapel

in the dark hours of the Revolution, and read the prayers to his ragged Continentals with his own lips, and Lee had gathered his officers about him for the same sacred service.

Mr. Davis believed the Holy Scriptures in all their fullness, and kept a chilk-like faith, close to the feet of the Saviour of mankind.

The bravery of the men who descended into the valley of the shadow of death, and gave life for country with a smile, like Pelham and Burgwyn, Avery and Cowan, and thousands more of the gray, was sublime. But it was not the supreme glory of the Confederacy. That lay in immortal character, to survive in other worlds than this.

All the world knew and respected the truth of the Confederate leaders. The reverent spirit of the noble proclamations of the President, calling the people to thanksgiving, or, alas! to fasting and prayer, impressed every heart.

No matter what false bulletins were published in Washington, and official victories claimed in New York, while flags flaunted in the breeze and cannon roared their empty salutes. (A single line from Jackson or from Lee. "God has been pleased to give victory to our arms to day" was accepted implicitly by all Christendom, and never in vain.

While on his way to prolong the struggle beyond the Mississippi, Mr. Davis was captured and conveyed to Fortress Monroe, with all the petty indignities that small minds could conceive.

And there he was confined in a dark casement within the rampart of the fortress, walled across to convert it into a dungeon, with openings for the lamp that blazed day and night, windows heavily barred, two sentinels within pacing the floor always, and forbidden to speak, yet always gazing upon him.

The ruler of a great country was treated like a felon, in the vain effort, through his torture, to degrade the eagle spirit of the South.

Nor did this satisfy his jailer, or the master, Stanton.

After a struggle in which death was courted, iron shackles of great weight were fastened upon the ankles of an old man, nearly sixty years of age, sick, emaciated, fevered, almost blind; the sight of one eye, long destroyed by neuralgia, and that of the other trembling in the balance; sleepless, worn with sorrow for his country, and anxiety for wife and children.

What was this for? There was no possibility of escape. What for, but to wreak revenge? They had feared the loss of power and of plunder, through the taxes and burdens direct and indirect, imports and tariffs paid by the South under the forms of law to heap up their wealth. And terror and shame had they undergone, again and again, when before the eyes of mankind their boasted victories had turned to crushing defeats. What for, then, but to punish us, you and your fathers, me and my children, in the person of this wasted, skeleton-like frame, with the irons cutting to the bone, and the long nights, impossible of rest or sleep. He bore all for his people.

His beloved and devoted wife was forbidden to see him; the military surgeon was not allowed to answer her impassioned appeals to learn his condition; he was denied the common comforts of life; refused the room and air for exercise when his life was in peril from its need, but not asked by him, for he never sought anything at the hands of his torturers. And so he was slipping rapidly down to death, when fear of the opinion of mankind brought some relief of the worst, although the prison held him two long years.

They accused him of the murder of Mr. Lincoln, but the falsehood was soon disproved.

They held him responsible for the sickness and death of Federal prisoners at Andersonville. Aye, and the slander is repeated to-day against the chivalrous men of the South, and in the very school books of the young.

They never tell you that the South had sixty thousand

more prisoners of the Northern armies than they possessed of ours; and yet four thousand more Confederates died as prisoners in the North than the Federals in our hands. Yes, they died, the brave and true, on the bleak plains of Johnson's island, in the great Northern lake, and herded in unspeakable misery at Camp Chase and Elmira, some in the very penitentiary, at Columbus, and in Fort Delaware, of brackish water unfit for man or beast, and on the burning sands of Point Lookout.

They do not tell you that however extreme was the necessity, brought about by their sword and torch, that the prisoner and his guard at Andersonville had the same daily ration, and died in the same ratio of mortality. They found in the official records, orders that prisoners and troops should fare alike of the scanty food at our command. Aye, although with unlimited food and medical supplies, our men were denied often, even with cruelty and insult. And moreover, they not only refused exchange, because Grant would not have our veterans in front of him again, at any cost;—refused to permit us to buy supplies and medical and surgical needs in their own or other ports to be used for suffering prisoners of their own; refused even to be burdened with the sick and disabled prisoners in our hands, tendered for humanity's sake, without exchange, and yet affect to deplore the evils, in their power alone to relieve!

They accused Mr. Davis of treason. But they dared not bring him to trial, after two long years of imprisonment. Although indicted and called for trial, eagerly looked for by him, to prove the falsehood of the charge, with the world for the greater jury. No, not in the light of the history of the Confederation, and of the Union of the American States, the plain language of the Constitution, and the whole course of the jurisprudence of the country. His allegiance had been rendered where the fathers had taught him that it belonged. And the refusal to try was confession at last before mankind that the words "rebel and traitor" were slanderous upon the truest patriot of his land.

He was a christian indeed. All the wrongs and tortures inflicted, passed from his soul as if they had never been, when at last, in his low and enfeebled state, his old rector, the good Doctor Minnegerode—well do I remember his pathetic face—was permitted to administer to his spiritual wants.

He asked to receive the holy communion, and as in duty bound, the Doctor bade him examine himself, whether he had truly forgiven his persecutors. When so assured, he knew the grace vouchsafed to the martyr had come to this suffering spirit. What a scene, this picture of the humble christian receiving the sacred elements at the hand of the man of God in his narrow dungeon, while without stands the commanding general, present even here, but turning his back in shame, with his armed guards, over the caged victim.

Once in all that time of deep grief and dark depression, in response to the kindly voice of his surgeon, rousing him from dangerous apathy, when questioned in regard to the women of the South. Mr. Davis forgot his sorrow and broke the silence with the triumphant ring of pride :

“If asked for my sublimest ideal of what woman should be, in the time of war, I would point to the dear women of my people, as I have seen them during the recent struggle.

“All they had was flung into the contest—beauty, grace, passion, ornament ; their songs, if they had heart to sing, were patriotic ; their trinkets cast into the public crucible ; the very carpets from their floors portioned out as blankets to the suffering soldiers of their cause.

“As nurses of the sick, as providers for the combatants, as angels of charity and mercy, as patient and beautiful household duties, accepting every sacrifice with unconcern, and lightening the burdens of war by every labor proper to their sphere, the dear women of my people deserve to take rank with the highest heroines of the grandest days of the grandest countries.”

Aye, great spirit that has passed the veil unto the unknown, you speak for history herself. I have stood upon the stony floor where those words were uttered and across which those chained feet were dragged, and gazing through the narrow deep sunk window into the speck of blue beyond, have felt that around me was a martyr's shrine, and yonder, his abiding home in Paradise.

Oh, the woman of the South is so unreconstructed, they say, and now she will build a monument to Jefferson Davis. This will be not only a memorial pile to the surpassing bravery of soldiers, which we have agreed to concede to the judgment of mankind, but to build to the "First and Last President of the Confederate States," is to commemorate the principles of State sovereignty; it is to declare that the soldiers of the gray were not only brave, but right, and their cause must receive the sanction of the ages.

The women of the South are so wrong. We admire their grace and beauty, we have been astonished at their revelation of energy and helpfulness; we are charmed by a fascination in voice and manner and exquisite courtesy; but oh, they look even now upon visions of a dead past, and linger with the grayhaired, poverty stricken men in gray. They do not know how to reverence the new gods, our mighty destiny, our power, our millions upon millions of treasure. The women of the South are unapproachable, but they are so wrong; they are wholly unreconstructed.

Thanks be to God, in a world of shifting change and fortune, some things are fixed and immutable. Are not truth and honor, the plighted faith of States and of men, virtue itself, unchangeable? Who can reconstruct truth with gilded falsehood?

The women of the South know what they do. The temptations to place and wealth and power reach not the serene atmosphere of high principle where they live, unapproachable by the creatures that bark at them below.

You, my dear countrywomen, will build this symbol of

the martyr and the cause. Build it now, while yet the officer lives who surrendered eleven thousand troops to Stonewall Jackson, almost without firing a gun, but won the victory of Fortress Monroe—the shackling of an aged, unarmed captive, the uncrowned king of Southern hearts. Build it as the everlasting type of the judgment of posterity!

Liberty, justice to the past, hope for the future of Constitutional government is in your hands. Let them print what books they please; place the image of the incendiary of Columbia and the robber of the Shenandoah upon the money we use, and deny the ground for a monument to Confederate prisoners where our dead are resting in Northern soil. With you, mothers and daughters and granddaughters of the Confederacy, all is safe. The children who nestle about your feet, when they look upon our graves, will never call us traitors.

Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, you are here! Mary, mother of Washington, you live again in these venerated forms—the mothers of the Memorial Association. And you, oh, sister of Johnston Pettigrew, whose presence was healing to the wounded and despairing in the hospitals of Virginia, you live always in these gracious Daughters of the Confederacy!

Dear guardians of the fame of your dead, let not North Carolina be the least in this, though greatest on every other page of Confederate history. More and more with the passing years did Mr. Davis come to know and love our people, in the last days of his life. Almost the final sentences from his pen were those addressed through that distinguished soldier, Col. Wharton J. Green, and his committee, to the people of North Carolina assembled at Fayetteville for the centennial celebration of the adoption of the Federal Constitution. For, although it was never accepted until assured of amendments protecting the rights of the State as the people understood them, nowhere was

the Constitution and Union of our fathers more sincerely loved. Mr. Davis said :

“ Without diminution of regard for the great and good men of other colonies, I have been led to special veneration for the men of North Carolina, as the first to distinctly declare for State independence, and, from first to last, to uphold the right of a people to govern themselves.

* * * * *

“ She gave her sons a sacrificial offering on the altar of the liberties their fathers had won, and had left as an inheritance to their posterity. Many sleep far from the land of their nativity. Peace to their ashes! Honor to their memory and the mothers who bore them ! ”

To these noble words your response will be a fit tribute to him who lay in darkness and the shadow of death. Spoken when more than four-score years had laid their weight upon his gray head, they sum up the judgment of history upon North Carolina.

You are the heart of North Carolina, and as you erect this shaft to the soldier, the statesman, the orator, the patriot and the Christian, you will say, in the beautiful language of another :—

“ To the dust we give his body :—
His memory to the ages.”

“ Ah, they chained his feeble frame,
But they could not chain his thought,
Nor the right for which he fought ;
And they could not chain his fame,
But they riveted his name
To the hearts of you and me.”



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